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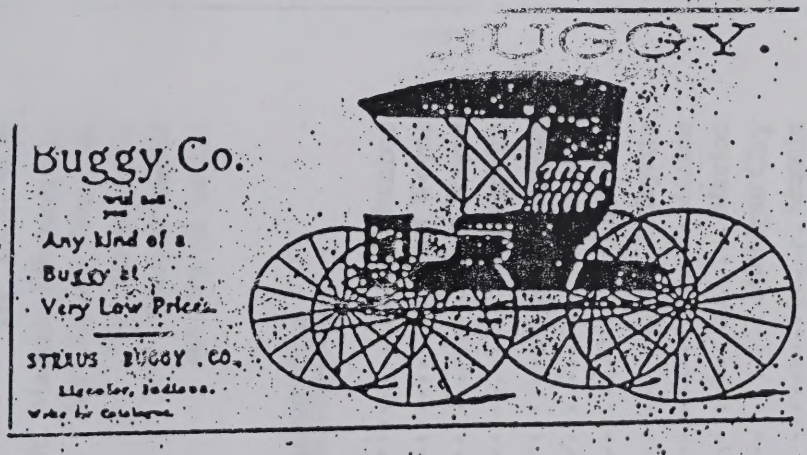
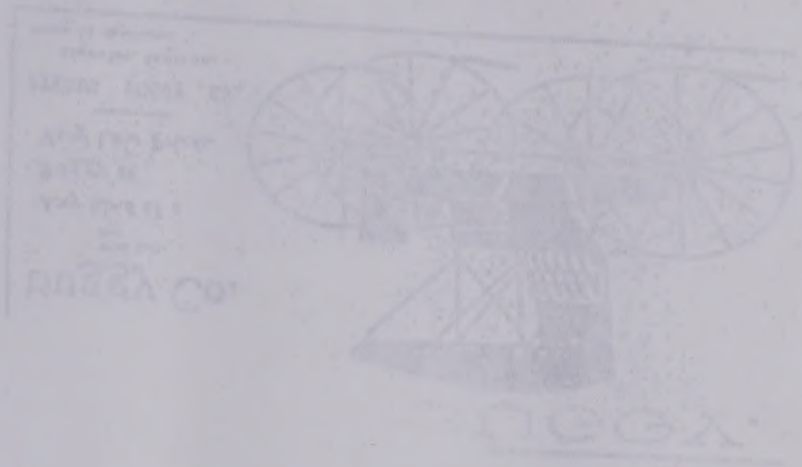
THE JEWS OF LIGONIER--AN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

by

Lois Fields Schwartz





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LIGONIER PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Lois Fields Schwartz

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author wishes to thank all the people who made available information concerning the Jewish population of Ligonier. A special thanks to Joe Levine, Executive Secretary of the Indiana Jewish Historical Society, for proposing the study and aiding in the search for knowledge of that community.

About the Author

Lois Fields Schwartz attended Hunter College, Montana State University, North Dakota State University, and received her B.A. degree from Moorhead State College in Moorhead, Minnesota. She did advanced work at Memphis State University, and has been a teacher of English and History. Having lived in many areas of the United States and traveled extensively, she has developed an interest in the history and development of early settlement of Jewish communities. Her article, "Early Jewish Agricultural Colonies in North Dakota," was published in the North Dakota Historical Society Journal, Vol. 32, No. 4, October, 1965, pp. 216-223.

For the past quarter century, the small mid-western Jewish community was fast disappearing from the American scene. This is a tragic loss, for these communities served in many ways to inform the larger gentile community of Jewish attitudes, mores, religious practices, history and concern for a Jewish state. For some Jews, small towns eased the process of accommodation, integration and Americanization due to the less strained experience associated with living in and dealing with the large city. Living in such communities provided unique economic, social, cultural and political opportunities not available in large urban areas.

Mrs. Schwartz' story of the Jews of Ligonier provides us with a brief history of one such community, describing its founding, flourishing and ultimate demise. Happily now, the record of the activity and contributions of that community and the individuals and institutions that comprised it will be preserved in the room set aside for that purpose in the Ligonier Public Library. Hopefully, the material saved and preserved will be put to good use both by serious researchers as well as popularizers of local history.

We are at the beginning of a truly serious study of communities such as Ligonier, where efforts have been made to collect, preserve and catalogue local Jewish historical data. Both Mrs. Schwartz and the Indiana Jewish Historical Society are to be complimented for their dedication and commitment to these efforts. The Society's series of publications should serve, hopefully, as a stimulus to other such groups to produce equally well conceived material.

Bernard Wax
Director
American Jewish Historical Society

THE JEWS OF LIGONIER--AN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

From the earliest recorded history of the "known" world, Jews traded and banked with a very high degree of trust with other Jews as well as with all people. In early world history, the key to successful trade was transportation on the high seas. Jews were instrumental in establishing systems of credit which thwarted the danger of severe monetary loss if ships were captured or sunk. Jews traded and traveled world-wide in places such as Babylon, Phoenicia, Greece, Egypt, Spain, Carthage, and Great Britain. This trust resulted from practicing the teachings of Jewish law--The Torah. For many centuries, these same teachings, among other things, encouraged confidence in Jewish businessmen. About 2,400 years after the beginning of the Diaspora, two German Jews inspired this same trust and confidence of the people of a small farming community, Ligonier, in north central Indiana, in the heartland of the mid-western United States. With packs on their backs, they peddled their wares from town to town until finally settling down and establishing roots. Their story parallels the history of thousands of German Jews who immigrated to the United States in the 1800s.

Many factors were instrumental in the migration of Jews to the United States from Germany. High taxes, loss of personal freedoms, and political

Frederick William Straus

Mrs. Frederick William Straus

animosities directed against Jews led the list. The Jewish population in the United States in 1840 was estimated at 15,000, and by 1860 it had swelled to 150,000.

Although trained in a variety of trades, many German Jewish immigrants earned their livelihood as peddlers. A vigorous and active trader developed his own routes and established his own customers, often going into areas where friends and relatives lived. He specialized in a particular kind of merchandise, and was called "basket peddler, custom peddler, pack peddler, wagon baron, and jewelry count."[1] In many cases, it did not take a long time for him to become an owner of a store--usually clothing or general merchandise. Often he would choose a site where there was no competition or established enterprise similar to his. He shied away from the larger cities where the Jewish population was great. In many communities, he was the only Jew, or his family was the only Jewish family.

Between 1830 and 1880, the growth of American cities was rapid, and out of this progressive expansion emerged many Jewish communities. The peddler, in a sense, was part of the pioneering spirit of America.[2] In establishing his own route, wandering alone and lonely from town to town, and finally settling in an area where no or few Jews lived, he followed no known pathways, but created his own.

Jews have wandered the world, involuntarily or voluntarily, leaving their places of birth, searching for a land where they could live in peace and freedom. The United States, in its short history, has held out hope to millions of people who immigrated to her shores, among them Jews from throughout the world.

In 1833, Frederick William Straus was born in Laufersweiler, and Solomon Mier in Kerchberg, Germany. Leaving Germany (it is not known whether they immigrated separately or together), crossing the ocean and arriving in the United States, the two men immigrated to northeast Indiana, probably residing in Fort Wayne and Angola or Auburn.[3] Advertisements in the 1854 newspapers declaring that the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad would go through Ligonier, Indiana, and that a station would be established there, probably attracted Straus and Mier to this village of 300 people. By the turn of the twentieth century, the village had become a thriving city and business center of about 2,200 people, including fifty-five Jewish families (more than 200 Jews). The Jewish community, by then had established its religious institutions, including a temple with a full-time resident rabbi. In addition, it established a Sabbath School, a Cemetery Society, a Ladies Benefit Society, a B'nai B'rith lodge, and a social club, while at the same time it became an important force in the Ligonier general community. For about eighty years, from 1854 to 1928, the Jewish community was an integral part of Ligonier and very influential in its growth and success. It is interesting that relatively large numbers of Jews settled in Ligonier rather than in larger metropolitan areas. A unique story unfolds

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[1] Nathan Glazer, "Social Characteristics of American Jews, 1654-1954," American Jewish Yearbook (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955), pp. 6, 7.

[2] [illegible] 7

[3] Stories differ concerning the arrival of Frederick W. Straus and Solomon Mier in Ligonier. We cannot document whether the two men arrived together or separately.

JACOB STRAUS

and shows how Jewish traditions were preserved and fulfilled while full participation and leadership in the secular society and complete "Americanization" were accomplished.

The following quote will give some idea of how the Jewish community was viewed by others:

> From 1845 to 1852, the growth of the village languished but at the latter date as it became assured that the Northern Indiana Railroad was to pass through the town, all manner of improvements underwent revival. Soon after this, quite a number of the shrewdest and business like and prosperous class of people, known as Jews, established themselves at Ligonier and the population and business wkhin five years quadrupled. The Jews wkh plenty of money have continued to come until no town in Indiana of the same size contains the same number of these excellent people. The beauty, amiabliky and grace of the Ligonier ladies is proverbial. Myers and Straus dealings in clodings [sic] and dry goods began business about 1854.[4]

After settling in Ligonier, F. W. Straus opened a small general store, and by 1860 brought his brothers, Mathias and Jacob, from Germany.

> The company grew large because people had confidence in it. Honesty and fair dealing had been an infallible rule since the inception of the business. A thorough knowledge of values and a sincere desire to serve have made friends of every customer. Many years have tested the company's financial judgement

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[4] Weston A. Goodspeed, History of Noble County, Part II, (Chicago: F. A. Battey and Company, 1882).

> and honesty of purpose. Cradled during the Civil War, this company came safely through unsettled times which followed--years of wildcat money and inflated values. It survived panic after panic with its resources and credit unimpaired. It stands today as representative of the best in American business integrity.[5]

In addition to the store, members of the Straus family branched out into other business ventures. The Straus Brothers first farm was purchased in 1860, with the official deed recorded on January 28, 1861. It was sold April 1, 1861. The farm contained eighty acres, and the sale contract was signed in the Straus General Store. According to Irvin Jacobs:[6]

> One morning two of the Strauses rode into the country in one of their factory-made buggies with the idea of selling some buggies to the local farmers. A trade was made--the farm and land in exchange for some buggies. In a short time some timber was sold, this amount of money equaling the Straus's initial investment. After repairs were made to the dilapidated farm buildings, a profit was made from the sale of the farm. From this first small farm transaction the Straus Quality Farms developed into the largest farm brokerage firm in the United States.

To this day much acreage in northeastern Indiana is owned by the descendants of the Jews who bought the land in the 1800s and 1900s.

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[5]Straus Brothers, Red Book, (Ligonier: 1909).

[6]Irvin Jacobs was born in Ligonier, and lived there until 1923. He died in 1977 at the age of eighty-nine.

In 1868, the Straus Brothers General Store was sold, and the brothers founded the Citizens Bank. The need for a bank to serve the community was apparent, and since the Straus brothers had in the past been available for advice and capital, it was natural for them to turn their interests to the field of finance.

In less than fifteen years, the Straus brothers replaced their back packs for a clothing and general merchandising store, and then emerged as successful land brokers and bankers. In 1884, Frederick W. Straus and Mathias Straus retired and moved to Chicago. Jacob Straus remained in Ligonier until 1892, and with his sons, Simon and Isaac and son-in-law Abe Goldsmith, carried on and expanded the businesses established there. The firm outgrew Ligonier and Indiana, and through the years, they founded banks in Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota, North Dakota, and southern Ontario, Canada. Jacob returned to Ligonier in 1898 and built the beautiful "White House" which is described later in this paper. He died in 1914 after his brothers, Mathias and Frederick, who died in 1890 and 1898. Taken from the official Ligonier City Council records is the following entry made on February 24, 1898:

> IN MEMORIAM
> (City Council Meeting)
>
> WHEREAS, in the earlier period of the corporate existence of the town now City of Ligonier the taxpayers thereof decreed it essential to the welfare of the place to call to the management of its municipal affairs a class of men whose capabilities and judgement were needed to secure a more satisfactory, systematic administration of local government; and

WHEREAS, among those chosen for the accomplishment of this purpose was our former townsman, F. W. Straus, who recently departed this life in the city of Chicago, sincerely beloved by his own household, and held in high esteem by a large circle of friends; and

WHEREAS, the said F. W. Straus, as a member of the Board of Trustees of the town of Ligonier, rendered the same valuable service by the inauguration of much needed reform and the introduction of wholesale business methods; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of Ligonier hold in grateful remembrance these well-directed efforts to bring order out of chaos, to lay the foundation for a properly conducted town government, providing means for the dissolution of a long-standing debit, and making it possible to obtain certain much needed public improvements (including the erection of a splendid education institution) and habitating the town and financial solidity and credit not thitherto enjoyed; also

BE IT RESOLVED, that this council hereby tender to the bereaved family its sincere sympathy in the irreparable loss sustained by the demise of a devoted husband and a loving father, and that the City Clerk be and is hereby directed to place this tribute upon the official records and transmit a copy thereof to the family of the deceased.

The following resolution appeared in the Temple minutes of 1914, The Ligonier Banner, and The Ligonier Leader:

The Divine Law must prevail, and as surely as man is born so must he also return to his Maker; but the blessings that come through a useful life do not pass with the departing of life. So is it with us, who have so recently lost our President Jacob Straus;

Our Temple, and everything connected with it will miss the guiding hand and the diligent care which he gave them, and our community will suffer from the inspiring presence that has passed, but the memory of that useful life will live and be a constant guide to love God and Man, to live upright, and to do justly; and therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that while we mourn our loss, we thank God that this life, so full of service, has been given to us, and that its noble example is the lasting monument to his memory;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these resolutions be spread upon our minutes and published in The Ligonier Banner and The Ligonier Leader.

About 1854, Solomon Mier opened a general merchandising store in the pattern of F. W. Straus, and had great success. His business enterprises were in partnership with his sons. Through the years Solomon Mier made loans and for safety held money for friends and customers. In 1862, he opened the Banking House of Solomon Mier and embarked officially in the banking business. The bank continued operations until 1928 when it merged with the Citizens Bank, managed by Abe Mier, and was called The American State Bank. To its credit, the bank remained solvent through the depression years of the 1920s and 1930s, when other local banks went bankrupt. Mier's carriage factory in Ligonier was another successful business. From 1908 to 1909, the Mier Carriage and Buggy Company manufactured

the Runabout model, which sold for $600 and had a two-cylinder, water-cooled engine, plus a friction wheel transmission with chain drive. A model of this automobile was on display at Bellms, Cars of Yesterday in Sarasota, Florida. In addition to the other business enterprises, Solomon Mier and Company became one of the largest farm land dealers in the Midwest, and attained national prominence.

Jewish relatives--cousins, nieces, aunts, and uncles--came to Ligonier under the sponsorship of Straus or Mier. Some worked for them, and after a period of time went into business for themselves, while others started their own business immediately. It appears that most were financially successful, but those who remained as clerks or workers for Jewish-owned companies lived modestly.

In business, the Jewish merchants formed a monopoly in clothing and general merchandise stores, grain and livestock, and land and farm brokerages. Other names in the official records are: Jacobs (general merchandising), Loeser (horses), Schloss (dry goods), Selig (cattle), Wertheimer (grain, seed, and wool). Other prominent families were: Ackerman, Kahn, Kann, Levy, Mayor, Rose, Sachs, Schuster, and Solomon.

The United States census for Noble County in 1850 has no apparent Jewish listings while the 1860 census has 11,360 names, which included the following Jews (the census not only listed name, age, and place of birth, but indicated the occupation, real estate holdings, and personal assets of the father):

Issac Ackerman	22, b. Prussia,	peddler
Solomon Ackerman	26, b. Prussia,	peddler
Simon Frank	27, b. Saxony,	peddler
Moses Jacobs	34, b. Prussia,	personal $100
[illegible] Kahn	18, b. Prussia,	clerk
Jacob Kahn	24, b. Prussia,	merchant, personal $2000
Joseph Kaufman	37, b. Prussia,	merchant
Barbara Kaufman	37, b. Prussia	
David Keller	18, b. Prussia	
Herman Lacoe	27, b. Prussia,	personal $50
Solomon Mier	27, b. Prussia,	merchant, real estate $1100, personal $2000
Theodora	20	
Ferdinand	3	
Julia		
Francis Straus (THIS IS NO DOUBT FREDERICK W. STRAUS)	27, b. Prussia,	merchant, real estate $500, personal $600
Jacob Straus	29, b. Prussia,	clerk, personal $4000
William Wachter	23, b. Bavaria,	clerk, real estate $400, personal $200

Farmers from more than a thirty-mile radius brought their crops and livestock to the Jewish merchants in Ligonier. These merchants had developed a sharp and sound business practice of paying more money for crops and livestock than the farmers could realize by shipping them to Chicago or Toledo. The merchant sold small produce locally and attracted the farmer to his store to purchase his clothing and other needs. The livestock and grain were shipped to Chicago or Toledo by the Jewish merchants. Thus the cycle which began in Ligonier ended there--with the Jewish merchants purchasing the farmer's products and the farmer purchasing his necessities from the merchant. Both were satisfied that a fair exchange had been made. The statistics testify to the success of this business enterprise., In 1878, whe

the population of Ligonier was 1,800, about 100 stores grossed $1,000,000 in total sales; approximately ten Jewish-owned stores earned one-third of this sum. Straus Brothers and Mier & Sons accounted for the major part of all the Jewish sales.[7]

Improvements, advancements, and refinements in all areas were introduced to Ligonier by various members of the Jewish community. In 1876, a public elementary and high school were established in Ligonier. The driving forces behind this move were F. W. Straus and John B. Stahl, a Presbyterian. Curriculum and discipline were very traditional in those years. "Those who received a high school diploma . . . came out of high school at the age of sixteen or seventeen years with a far better understanding of the basic principles of English and math . . . and more refined patriotic feeling than children who graduate from our schools today. The Jews of Ligonier especially required of their children strict attention to their duties in the school, plus duties which were household chores, and which took a lot of time and patience on the part of the children."[8]

In addition to being a successful businessman, F. W. Straus was learned in English and American history and the English language. He was a cultured man of great foresight, and directed many of the advancements made in Ligonier.

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[7]Leo Srole, "Report of Findings in a Preliminary Community Survey of the German-Jewish Group of Ligonier, Indiana" (Unpublished Study, August 1938), pp. 51, 52.

[8]Leon Wertheimer, as dictated to Joseph Levine June 7, 1963. Transcript of Wertheimer's history material on Ligonier in archives of Indiana Jewish Historical Society.

Solomon Mier was the prime mover for the installation of the first sewer and disposal systems. In 1889, as a member of the City Council, he sagely insisted that the water works should be publicly owned and not be subject to private control. Other Jews also officially served the city of Ligonier between 1889 and 1956. Old records reveal that Joel Selig was a member of the Town Trustees in 1890, and was the president when it was decided "to hold a special election to determine the incorporation of the town of Ligonier as a City provided for in the Acts of 1881 and all subsequent acts of the legislature." When an ordinance dividing the city into three wards was adopted, Joel Selig was elected one of four trustees. On May 3, 1892, the first Common Council meeting was held, and Solomon Mier was selected councilman from the Second Ward, a position he held until 1894. The Council minutes show that Simon J. Straus was the president of the Council from 1894 until 1898. A. B. Mier was elected councilman in 1896, and served until 1898. During his term, he was a member of the Finance Committee, Police Committee, and Fire Department Committee. On November 28, 1907, Will Baum was appointed to the Library Board. Sol Henoch served as a councilman from 1912 to 1918, and as mayor from 1918 to 1921. During the years 1923 and 1924, Abe Wertheimer served as a member of the City Council. Sigmond W. Kann was the 1916 Democratic nominee for State Statistician. In 1928 he was the delegate to the Democratic National Convention, and in 1930 he unsuccessfully ran for the United States Congress. Ben Glaser, who was elected councilman in 1953, remained a member of the Council until June 27, 1955, when he was appointed to fill out the term of Mayor L. L. Koon, who died on May 23, 1955. Ben Glaser served as mayor of Ligonier until

January 1956.[9]

The Jewish community was not without its flaws. As evidenced in every community, there were nervous breakdowns, suicides, mentally and emotionally disturbed children, frustrated and disappointed adults. There existed acute competition and antagonism in the world of business and finance between the Straus and Mier families. Records indicate that no marriages occurred between the two families in the first and second generations in Ligonier. These strained attitudes were forgotten when it came to religion, which received full, wholehearted support from both families.

By 1865, the need for formal worship was fulfilled when fifteen families formed the Congregation Ahavath Shalom (Lovers of Peace), later affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in Cincinnati, Ohio. An election of officers was held, and the following people were elected: Mathias Straus, president; Isaac Ackerman, vice president; Jonas Decker, treasurer; H. B. Falk, secretary; Solomon Mier, Leopold Schloss, and F. M. Straus, trustees. Services for the new congregation were held in the members' homes. The steady growth of the Jewish community was paralleled by the growth of the congregation. Records show that Jacob Straus donated a Jewish bible valued at $200.

From the very beginning, Bar Mitzvah was required for all thirteen-year-old boys. The men did not wear yamalkas, but did wear hats, and during the high holy days, the older men followed the German custom of wearing tallisim. Families observed the dietary laws and followed the custom of using two sets of dishes, milchich for dairy foods and flaishig for meats.

In 1871, the complexity and increasing needs of the congregation resulted in the building of a small frame synagogue on Main Street, where services, Hebrew school, and the necessary rituals were performed. Although it was an Orthodox congregation, several reforms were introduced to better meet the needs of the congregants. Family pews were established where the entire family sat together for services and listened to their resident rabbi (who was also the schochet) deliver his sermon in German. About 1876, the Reform Prayer Book replaced The Einhorn Prayer Book, following the trend of the Reform movement.

In 1888, paralleling the fortunes of the Jewish community, a larger and more elaborate temple was built, also on Main Street, on which there were many of the Jewish homes. The cost of $15,000 was much higher than the figure of $4,500 which was specified in the Temple Minutes as the amount to be used in building the new temple.[10] The low bid, according to the Temple Minutes, was $3,863.[11] Rabbi D. Eppstein was employed as the first rabbi at $800 per annum.[12] The dedication of the new Temple on Friday, September 6, 1889 was a milestone in Ligonier history. The next day, Saturday, September 7, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise (the foremost pioneer in the American Reform Jewish movement) gave the

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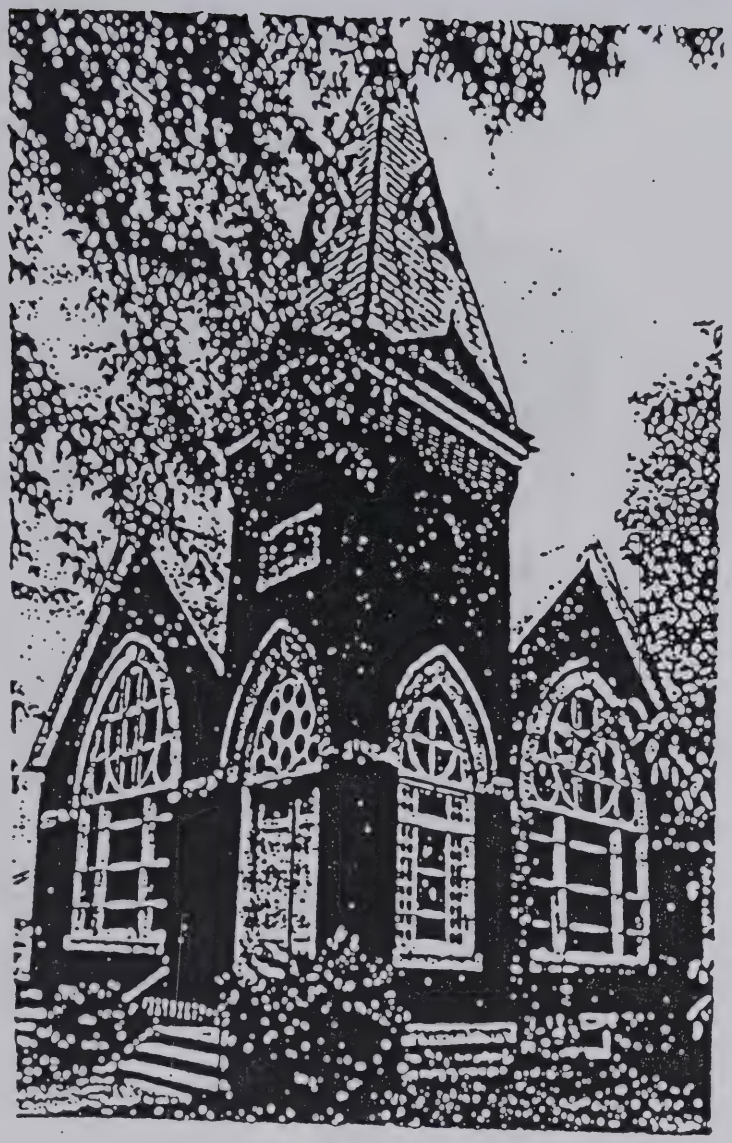
[9] Ligonier Official Town and City Records, 1890-1956.

[10] Temple Ahavas Sholem Minutes, October 7, 1888.

[11] Temple Ahavas Sholem Minutes, March 19, 1889.

[12] Temple Ahavas Sholem Minutes, December 9, 1888.



Temple Ahavath Sholom

sermon entitled "Footprints of Judaism in the World's History," which was reported to be "most interesting and instructive." The music was furnished by the Ligonier Military Band. Mamie Wertheimer (Mrs. Samuel Wolf) was eight years old when she carried the key to the new temple from the old temple and presented it to Dr. Wise, reciting a verse written by him.

Wise's sermon, stating "that no building and no character stands unless the foundations are strong and rugged," was reported by the local newspaper to be an inspiration to all who attended the ceremony, many of whom were non-Jewish leaders and officials from nearby communities.[13]

The scrolls were carried to the new ark by the oldest members of the Temple, Solomon Baum and David Loeser, led by Rabbi D. Eppstein. An original poem, "Our New Temple," written by Jacob Baum, was read by Willie Baum, the poet's young son. Active in the ceremony was Jacob Straus, president of the congregation, and Rabbi Solomon of Appleton, Wisconsin, father of member Leo Solomon.

Concluding the three days of dedication services, a Sunday evening banquet was given by the ladies of the congregation in the lodge room of B'nai B'rith, with over 200 guests attending. At 9:30 supper was served, at 10:30 speech-making commenced, and at 12:15 the guests departed for City Hall to dance at a ball. Few celebrations have been as grand, with many out-of-town guests, gourmet food, music, and the ladies dressed in elegant gowns.[14]

Many of the beautiful works in the Temple were gifts from the congregants. In a letter from

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[13] The Ligonier Banner, September 12, 1889.
[14] Ibid.

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STRAUS, ACKERMAN & CO.
Farmers' Bank.
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Mrs. Mayme L. Joseph, she mentions a marble slab representing a book with the Ten Commandments and the eternal light which presently hangs in the Lakeside Congregation for Reform Judaism in Highland Park, Illinois.[15] The stained glass windows were donated by the Mier, Wertheimer, Schloss, and Straus families, while the organ was given in memory of Leopold Schloss.[16]

In the next decade the synagogue and Orthodox Judaism changed to the temple and Reform Judaism. The Hebrew School became the Sabbath School; the English language replaced the German language sermon; a Gentile choir and organist were hired to perform at services; and confirmation for boys and girls replaced Bar Mitzvah for boys only. The years approaching and including the 1900s were the zenith of the Jewish community in Ligonier. It was said that on Friday nights, a person could ride through Ligonier and see the flickering of candles in celebration of the Jewish Sabbath.

In 1900, the year the Jewish community reached its apex, the Temple Minutes recorded the death of Leopold Weil, who had come to Ligonier five years earlier, had been an active member of the congregation, and . . . "the soul of honor, the embodiment of integrity, his life was characterized by simplicity, earnest devotion to duty and for these noble qualities was held in high esteem by the community wherever he resided."[17]

Sigmund Washington Kann (born in Ligonier of

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[15]Letter from Mrs. Mayme L. Joseph, May 26, 1973, to Joseph Levine.

[16]Letter from Mrs. Rosalie W. Loeser, June 2, 1973, to Joseph Levine.

[17]Temple Minutes, 1900, "In Memoriam."

German-born parents) was a man of modest means who worked for S. B. Thing Rubber Footwear Company. Kann had three daughters, two of whom I spoke to at length about their early years in Ligonier. Mrs. Maurice Rothberg and Mrs. Kathryn Mendelblat remember their youth as being filled with parties, fun, and friends. Since, in those years, there were not many Jewish children their age, most of their friends were gentile. They left Ligonier in 1923 at the ages of nine and almost eleven. Their mother, Mae, converted to Judaism in 1918 because of her acceptance and warm reception by the Ligonier Jewish community. The conversion took place eight years after she was married and about two years after coming to Ligonier as Sig Kann's wife with two children.

In Srole's study on the Ligonier Jewish community, he points out that a period of waiting was necessary to see if a gentile bride would fit comfortably and prove herself compatible with the Jewish population. If she were not an irritant, but joined in the activities and became an active member of the community, she was eventually accepted into Jewish society. Membership of the gentile wife in the Temple Sisterhood meant full acceptance.[18]

Although Temple membership began to decline in the twenties, many functions continued to take place. The Confirmation Class of 1919 consisted of Henrietta Schloss, Rose Selig, Alfred Ackerman, and Catherine Baum, with Rabbi Robert Minda presiding.

On Sunday morning, June 7, 1925 at 10:30, Hortense Selig (Mrs. Herbert Salzman) gave the Confirmation prayer, Jane Wertheimer (Mrs. Edward S. Hart) gave the Confirmation speech, Rabbi Julius Mark conducted the Confirmation service, and Sol Henoch, president of the congregation, awarded the Confirmation Certificates to the two girls. This was Rabbi Mark's first confirmation, an interesting beginning for the man who was to become the spiritual leader of Temple Emanu-El in New York twenty-three years later.

In the next twenty years, there was a sharp decline in the Jewish population of Ligonier. There are a number of reasons for this. First, apparently immigrant Jews settled in the larger American cities which held a greater attraction for them, with more opportunities to make a living. Another reason could be that the children of the Ligonier Jews attained their higher education in other cities, married, and settled away from Ligonier. Still another reason could be that, as the older Jews died, members of their families did not want to continue in the same business in Ligonier, and left for other areas. By 1904, a part-time rabbi from South Bend conducted services only on Friday nights, and taught Sabbath School on Saturday mornings. In 1920, the population numbered less than one-half of its former count, or twenty-four families. Beginning in 1932, services were held only on the High Holidays, conducted by a lay person from Chicago, and the Sabbath School closed its doors.

H. W. Schloss refers to "the famous Rabbi Cronbach of the faculty of the HUC" as having been a rabbi of the Ahavas Sholem Congregation.[19] Mrs. Joseph speaks of sharing a rabbi with South Bend and later of a Mr. Cronbach who conducted services

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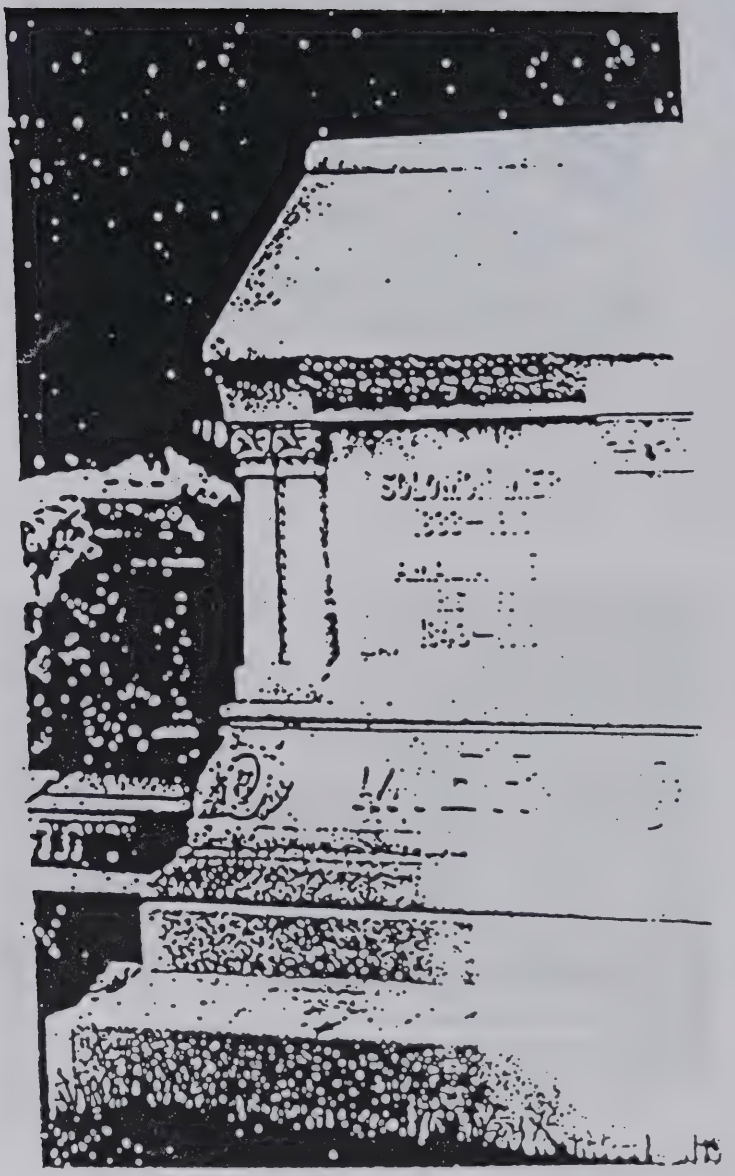
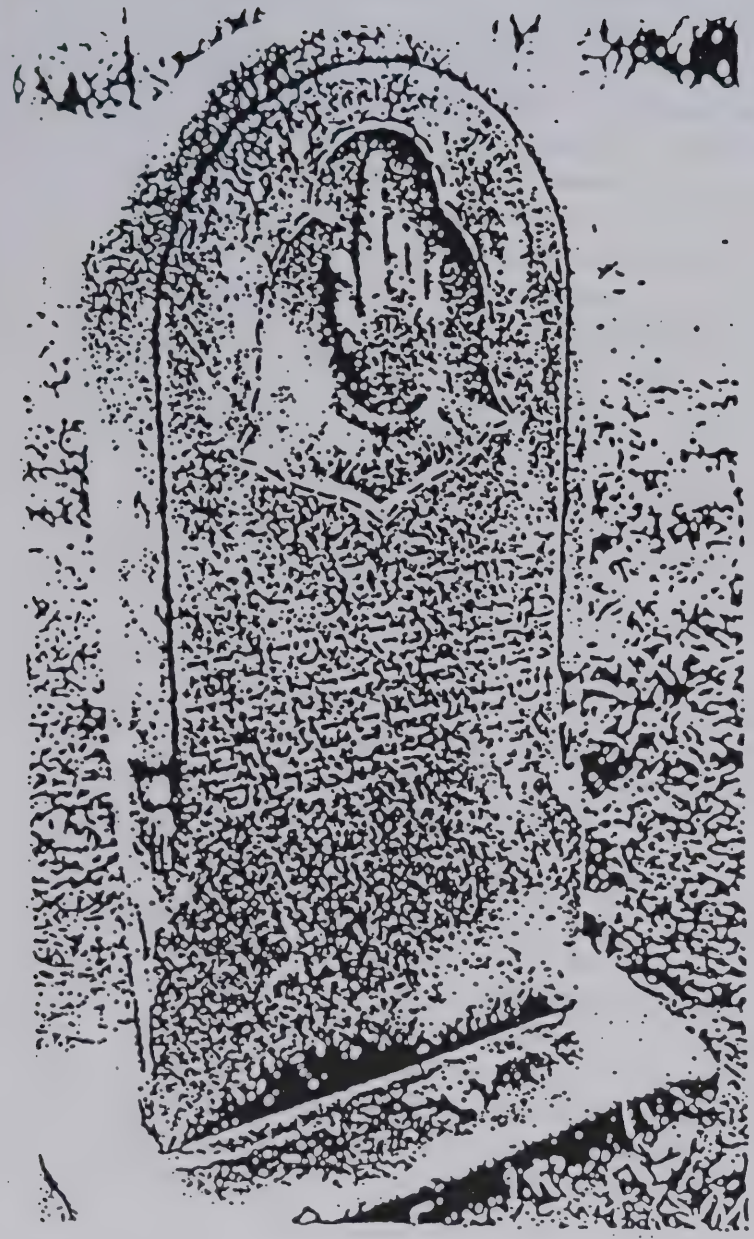
[18] Srole, op. cit., pp. 23, 24.

[19] Letter written by H. W. Schloss to Joseph Levine of the Indiana Jewish Historical Society, November 4, 1976.

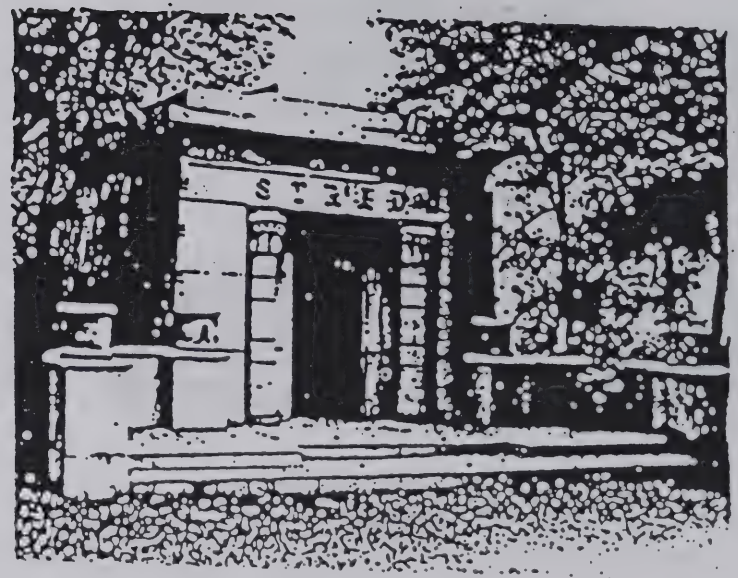
MEYER DAVIS
SEP. 25. 1836
JAN. 8. 1922.
OCHS





Old Tombstone
in Jewish Section of Cemetery
at Ligonier, Indiana

Jewish Section in Ligonier Cemetery



Straus Mausoleum

broadened into national and international scope in addition to performing local services.

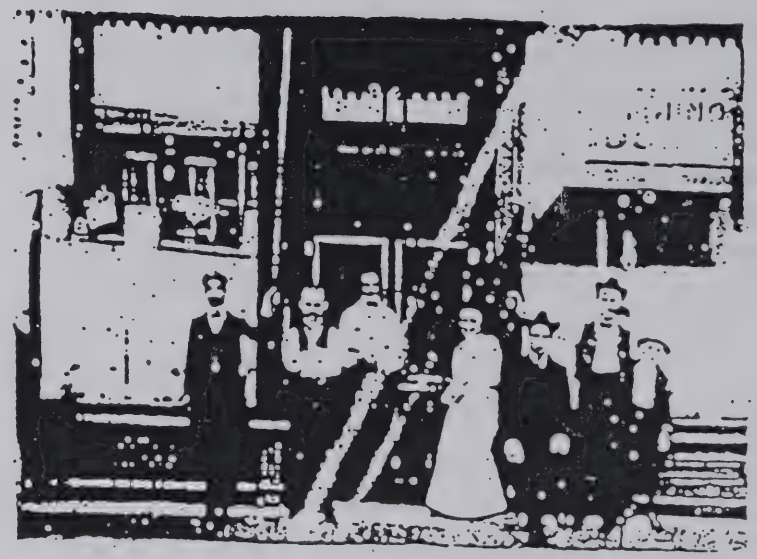
The B'nai B'rith Lodge No. 298 was established in 1878 with twenty-six members, growing to thirty-six members in 1895. The original officers were: Abe Goldsmith, president; N. Wertheimer, vice president; Eli Jacobs, treasurer; Leo Solomon, secretary; Jacob Baum, monitor; Joseph Selig, assistant monitor; Henry Sax, warden; Jacob Frank, guardian. In 1908 or 1909, B'nai B'rith locally raised $1,000 for overseas Jewish needs. The lodge lasted until 1936, when its charter was revoked because the minimum number of members could not be sustained.

The Jewish Social Club was located on Gavin Street, and was the center of social life. The club house included a 22 foot by 90 foot ballroom, sitting rooms, a bar, and a card room which was very popular with both men and women. Nonreligious functions, such as parties, dances, and celebrations, took place in this club. Although it was basically a club for Jews, four gentile families were members. Because of the changing attitudes of the younger generation and the dwindling population, lack of interest caused it to close in 1915.[23]

In 1938 most Jews belonged to the Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, and the Elks. Some children belonged to the Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and the Camp Fire Girls. A number of women belonged to the Daughters of the American Revolution, Progressive Club, and the Eastern Star. One Jew was a Mason. In years prior to 1938, Jews were active in the Knights of Pythias and the Odd Fellows. Before the early '20s, the Masons was a very popular organization.[24] During

[23]Srole, op. cit., p. 19.
[24]Srole, op. cit., pp. 65, 66.

Piety Corner



Front of M. Jacobs & Co. Clothing Store
Ligonier, 1901
l. to r. -- Eli Jacobs, Meyer Hess, unknown, Stella Baum, Harry Sax, Morris Hess, and Irwin Jacobs

the early 1920s, Ligonier had a cross-burning Ku Klux Klan chapter. When, somehow, the membership list was made known to the Jewish community, it appeared that many of the Klansmen were also Masons, and because of this reason, the Jews resigned en masse. The Elks became the popular club after this incident, and the Masonic Lodge lost a great deal of prestige. It is interesting to note that, in 1933, a Jewish newcomer to Ligonier was elected to the Masons.[25] Was this an attempt to placate the Jewish population into rejoining the Masons, or was this a token membership?

In 1908, Carnegie funds plus other donations made the building of a public library in Ligonier a reality. Through a bequest of $1,000 from Abraham Goldsmith and daughters, the Abraham Goldsmith Memorial Reference Room was furnished. Others who gave to the library included Simon Straus, who provided $1,000 for juvenile books. Miss M. Jacobs gave $200, and Miss Ruth Mier contributed $100. The Temple Sisterhood donated the first one hundred books. Today, the library, which still stands on Main Street, has been remodeled and decorated in bright and lively colors, and has its shelves filled with books. In the northwest corner of the building is a room dedicated to the glorious past history of the Jewish community which has all but vanished. Besides donations of books, there are pictures, newspapers, and memorabilia of the more than one hundred years that the Jewish community existed. The library's Board of Directors volunteered to set aside this room for a permanent collection of material on the history and contributions of the Jews to the growth of the city of Ligonier. The Indiana Jewish Historical Society provided a collection of black and white, as well as color, photographs of Jewish homes, the cemetery, the Temple, other buildings, and much of the other material in the collection. The Society has been instrumental in searching for, finding, and preserving material dealing with Jewish life in Ligonier, and hopes to continue this quest.

On July 13, 1974, a formal dedication was held for the addition to the library. On the same date the Jewish Historical Room was officially opened. Joseph Levine, executive secretary of the Indiana Jewish Historical Society, was one of the principal speakers, and gave a brief history of the Jewish community of Ligonier and Levine introduced all the Jews who attended the dedication. (See Addendum.)

The city of Ligonier is proud to pay this tribute to the Jewish residents who were such an integral, vital, and forward-looking segment of this small midwestern community. Today, in 1977, three elderly Jews live in Ligonier: Durbin Mier, Ben Glaser, and Oscar Barch. In addition, all that one can find besides the records are the Temple, the homes, the buildings, and the cemetery; these are the meager remains of the active and vibrant years of the Jewish community of Ligonier between 1854 and 1954.

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[25] Srole, op. cit., pp. 78, 79.

Rabbi Julius Mark with two confirmands

Confirmation Class of 1919
l. to r. -- Henrietta Schloss, Rose Selig,
Rabbi Robert Minda, Alfred Ackerman,
and Catherine Baum

ADDENDUM #1

SOME EXCERPTS FROM THE MINUTES OF CONGREGATION AHAVAS SHOLEM

October 7, 1888: Meeting to plan building new Temple at cost of no more than $4,500. Note: Jacob Straus was president.

December 9, 1888: Employed Rabbi Eppstein at $800 per annum.

January 19, 1889: Re: building, lowest bid $3,863, total needed $4,093. Again voluntary contributions made by members.

February 3, 1889: Appeal for extra contributions . . . received the following: J. Straus $50, Solomon Mier $25, N. Wertheimer $15, Abe Goldsmith $15, L. Schloss $15, Joe Levy $5, Isaac Ackerman $5, D. Selig $5, E. Jacobs $5.

May 16, 1889: Meeting to plot cemetery.

July 17, 1889: Meeting to plan dedication of September 6, 1889.

August 28, 1892: Jacob Straus resigned -- leaving town.

Many minutes deal with the purchase of Temple seats.

Note: Rabbi Eppstein resigned, and on October 23, 1892 was re-employed at a salary of $600 per year starting February 1, 1893 until February 1, 1894.

pril 16, 1893: Solomon Mier elected president.

ugust 18, 1894: The following elected trustees: M. Baum, one year; Abe Goldsmith, two years; Meyer Goldsmith, three years.

May 5, 1895: The following motion was made and seconded that Rabbi Eppstein be notified not to say any prayer for a non-member at any occasion unless such a non-member brings a receipt for $2 or pay this amount to Mr. Eppstein to be given to the Secretary.

February 2, 1898: Employed Rabbi J. C. Magid at a salary of $1,000 per year.

February 28, 1898: Special meeting re: death of F.W. Straus born in Laufersweiler February 28, 1833 and died in Chicago February 8, 1898. President of congregation 16 years.

September 11, 1898: Jacob Straus again president of congregation.

February 26, 1899: Rabbi Magid asked for $1,200--congregation agreed and members made contributions from $50 to $1.

1908: Solomon Mier elected president.

1914: Resolution on Death of Jacob Straus.

November 8, 1914: I. D. Straus elected president of congregation.

ADDENDUM #2

LIST OF GUESTS
ATTENDING THE TEMPLE DEDICATION

The Ligonier Banner, September 12, 1889

D. Aach
Ben Ackerman, Butler, Indiana
M. Applebaum
Miss Lucy Dueschner
Miss Pauline Dueschner
Jacob Grunauor
George Hart, Hopkinsville, Kentucky
Mrs. J. Hart
Lulu Hart
Miss Bessie Hect, LaPorte, Indiana
Mrs. Sol Hirsh, Clinton, Iowa
Leo Isay, Churubusco, Indiana
Adolph Kahn
Mrs. Henry Kahn, Chicago
Ike Kann
Nathan Kaufman, Toledo, Ohio
Mr. and Mrs. J. Keller, Kendallville, Indiana
Ben Kramer, Columbia City, Indiana
Miss Hannah Kraus
Max Kraus, Columbia City, Indiana
Max Livingston, South Bend, Indiana
Marvin Loeb
Mr. and Mrs. Ford Loeser, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Mr. and Mrs. J. Lowenstein, Waterloo, Indiana
Miss Carrie Marks
Miss Clara Mauch
Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Mayor
Miss Mier, Fremont, Indiana
Miss Carrie Philipson

ke Philipson, Warsaw, Indiana
)l Rose and Ike Rose, LaGrange, Indiana
erman Schopplacher
osa Stiefel
.ev. Strass, Fort Wayne, Indiana
.be Straus
Ar. and Mrs. E. Straus
Ar. and Mrs. F. W. Straus
. Straus, Cincinnati, Ohio
Misses Lena and Hattie Straus
Mrs. M. Straus
Mathias Straus
Miss Sophia Straus
Mr. Wallace, Cleveland, Ohio
Mr. and Mrs. David Welt, Cromwell, Indiana
Mrs. D. Wingarten, New York
Rabbi Isaac M. Wise

and others.

ADDENDUM #3

LIST OF LAY LEADERS, RABBIS, AND
STUDENT RABBIS WHO SERVED CONGREGATION
AHAVAS SHOLEM
(Found in old records of the congregation)

Mr. J. Baum	1862-1887
Mr. S. Straus	1889
Rabbi Eppstein	1889-1895
Dr. Farber, Erie, Pa.	1888 Holy Days
Dr. Isaac Mayer Wise	1888 Dedication Service
Rabbi Philo	1895-1896 Holy Days
Rabbi Magill	1897-1901
Mr. Leo Kovitz	1900 Holy Days
Rabbi H. Englander	1902-1904
Rabbi Fredrick Brown	1905-1906
Rabbi Cromboch	1907-1908
Rabbi L. Gross	1909 Holy Days
Rabbi Abraham Cromboch	1909-1910
Rabbi Joseph Josen	1910-1911
Rabbi Cromboch	1911-1912-1915
Dr. K. Kohler	1913 Holy Days
Mr. Friedman	1914 Holy Days
Dr. Cronbach	1916 Holy Days
Mr. Julius Laibut	1917
Dr. Cronbach	1919 Holy Days
Rabbi Minda	1919-1920
Mr. Walter Rothman	1921 Holy Days
	1922
Rabbi Julius Mark	1923-1925
Rabbi William Stern	1926-1935
Robert Lee Straus	1936-1937
Rabbi Cronbach	1937-1940
Rabbi Dorffman	1940-1941
Rabbi Cronbach	1942-1943
Emmett Eugene Frank	1944-1945
Jerome Cohler Cohen	1946
M. Robinson	1947-1948
M. Robinson	asked for 1949

ADDENDUM #4

BURIALS IN OLD PART OF JEWISH CEMETERY

Hannah Abersohn
Ferd & Bertie Ackerman
Harriet Ackerman
Isaac Ackerman
Lizzetta Ackerman
Michael Ackerman
Solomon Ackerman
Children of
Solomon Ackerman
Aaron Baum
J. & I. Baum
Leon Baum
Leopold Baum
M. & D. Baum's Son
Meyer Baum
Sarah Baum
Solomon Baum
Jacob Bonem
Cohn
Leopold Dreifuss
Alexander Engle
Charles Folk
Jacob & Fannie Frank
William Geismann
Hannah Granger
Rosa Hess
Herman Hirschler
Willard W. B. Jacob
M. & G. Jacobs' Son
Moses Jacobs
Rosa Jacobs
Sidney Jacobs
Solomon Jacobs
Milton Kaufman
Hyman J. Keller
Isaac Loeb
J. Loeb
Joseph S. Loeb
Marguerita Loeb
Sarah Loeser
Regina Maas
Eli Madlon
Magili
Edward Magnus
Pauline Magnus
Sol & Minnie May
Amalie Mier
Carrie Mier
Jacob Ochs
Jacob Ochs
Simon Ochs
Dinah Rose
Elias Rose
Lazarus Rose
Silas Rose
Amelia Schloss
Caroline Schloss
Edna J. Schloss
Harmon Schloss
William Isaac Seahouse
Selig
Solomon Selig
Israel Simon
Isaac Stiefel
Eli Straus
Eliza Straus
Gabriel & Rosa Straus
Jonas Straus
Joseph Straus
Julia Straus
Mina Straus
Moses Straus
Samuel Straus
Sarah Straus
Edwin Welt

ADDENDUM #5

BURIALS IN NEW PART OF JEWISH CEMETERY
(as of June 1972)

Abe Ackerman
Benjamin Ackerman
Blanche Ackerman
Ferd Ackerman
Hattie Ackerman
Regina Ackerman
Simon Ackerman
Solomon Ackerman
Isaac Baum
Isaac M. Baum
Meyer Baum
Sarah Baum
Amelia Gates
Jacob Gates
Ethel Glaser
Carrie Hess Henock
Jennie Hess
Joseph Hess
Maurice Hess
Jennie Hyman
Max Hyman
Pauline Hyman
Tillie Israel
Abraham Jacobs
Belle Jacobs
Clara Jacobs
Eli Jacobs
Herman Jacobs
Lena Jacobs
Leola Jacobs
Meyer Jacobs
Nanette Jacobs
Sidney Jacobs
Herman Kahn
Isaac Kahn
Julius Kahn
Hattie S. Kann
Josephine Kann
Mae Porter Kann
Meyer Kann
Mose Frank Kann
Sigmond Kann
Solomon J. Kann
Carl Keller
Jacob Keller
Mrs. Jacob Keller
Pauline Hyman Keller
Sidney Keller
Carrie Levy
Esther Levy
Joseph Levy
Louis J. Levy
Robert J. Levy
Caroline Weil Loeser
Hubert F. Loeser
Leo Loeser
Milton Loeser
Solomon Loeser
Rhineas Magnus
Abe B. Mier
Amelia Mier
Everett L. Mier

LIGONIER PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Indiana Jewish Historical Society
303 Standard Building
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802
Telephone 219/422-3862

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